

Governor McGreevey Names Gwendolyn L. Harris Commissioner

GWENDOLYN L. HARRIS, whose career includes experience in virtually every part of the social services community, was sworn in as Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Human Services by Governor James E. McGreevey on May 6.

Harris, who once worked for the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS), comes to DHS from the City of Trenton, where she most recently served as Chief of Staff to the Mayor. Prior to that, she had served both as the city's Director of Health and Human Services and Business Administrator.

Before joining the City of Trenton in 1990, Harris held various positions in a number of different social service settings, including psychiatric social worker in a community mental health program, program director for the state's largest non-profit economic development corporation and founding director of Newark Emergency Services for Families, Inc.

"In more than 20 years of dedicated public service, Gwendolyn Harris has demonstrated that she is capable of not only leading New Jersey's Department of Human Services, but of leading it in the right direction," said McGreevey. "She has seen first-hand, from the inside and the outside, how the department runs, and she has a strong commitment to making it run better."

Since starting work in February, Harris has been on a whirlwind mission to get to know the current operations of the Department of Human Services, its nine divisions and offices and its 19,000 employees. She has visited DHS programs around the state including developmental centers, psychiatric hospitals and day care centers, and has more visits scheduled in the future.

"It's a big department, and I feel that being able to visit our institutions and programs is an important part of the education of Gwendy Harris," said

Harris. "Of course, it's impossible for me to see each and every one of the one million people this department serves. But overall, I want to get as

the best way to provide those services," she said. "We have to make sure that we're not providing services in a certain way, just because it fits the

demands of the funding stream, or because it's the way we've always done things."

As an example of what she's talking about, she points to the state's welfare reform program, WorkFirst NJ, which is being administered through the Division of Family Development (DFD).

"At DFD, we have a real success story," she said. "Thousands of people are moving from welfare to work. But we still have issues to address, and the way we choose to address those issues will affect

the way we provide services in the future. For one thing, even though people are working, not all of them are making enough money to live on. For another, a third of the people still on welfare are children, most of whom receive cash assistance,

good a sense as I possibly can about what this department does, where and how it happens, for whom we're providing services and by whom those services are delivered."

To help run the department, Harris has assembled an experienced management team that includes both people new to the Department and long-time DHS employees. (see story on pp. 4-5) Even so,

Harris said she wants to be an active and visible part of DHS.

"I don't want to be a 'good' Commissioner who sits in an office moving paper around," she said. "I want to be a Commissioner who sees and experiences both the good and the bad, first-hand."

Harris said that she is particularly committed to achiev-

ing the Governor's stated goal of changing the way government does business. At DHS, she said, that means making basic changes in the way services are designed and provided.

"We have to look at whether the way we are currently providing services to people is necessarily



Gwendolyn L. Harris was sworn in as Commissioner of the N.J. Department of Human Services by Governor James E. McGreevey, on May 6. Standing with Harris are state Supreme Court Judge James H. Coleman, Jr., her husband Jerome C. Harris, Jr. and her father, Samuel P. Long, Jr.



"I want to be a Commissioner who sees and experiences both the good and the bad, first-hand."

even though the adults with whom they live, do not. Many of these children have issues that the welfare system isn't really set up to deal with, although other systems, such as the mental health system, are. Within the organizational structure as it exists right now, however, there's no way to get those children the help they need."

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Letter from the Commissioner

As I begin my tenure as Commissioner, one thing seems clear. In a department as large as DHS, with so many divisions, offices, programs and employees, not to mention the almost one million people we serve, it can be very difficult to see exactly where each of us fits and understand how important our work really is.

We are an \$8.3 billion organization with 19,000 employees engaged in disparate, and often seemingly unrelated, occupations throughout the state. Yet, in all that we undertake, we are bound together by our common desire to fulfill one of the most difficult of all missions--to protect, assist and support all those

people in New Jersey who are most at risk, most vulnerable and most in need.

Through the *Department of Human Services News*, I believe we can all get a better sense of how this sprawling department goes about fulfilling that mission. Through information about our programs and activities, each of us will get a much better idea of where we fit and how much our work matters.

In this issue, for instance, you will read about the one-year-old Division of Disability Services and its growing work on behalf of people with disabilities. You will read about the changes recently made to NJ FamilyCare, the popular health insurance program for working families, in order to make sure it could continue to serve children. You will read about the grants we made to organizations fighting child abuse and get an update on our program to assist people who raise their grandchildren. And, you will read about the Governor's pledge to provide new programs for teenagers aging out of foster care and making the difficult transition to adulthood.

I am committed to fostering better communication among the divisions, programs and employees of the Department of Human Services, and I believe that this newsletter will play a role in helping us achieve that goal. I expect that this and future issues will not only help you continue to learn more about the challenging work being done by the Department of Human Services, but also help you take pride that an organization like this exists to assist the most vulnerable people of New Jersey.

Gwendolyn L. Harris

State Budget for 2003 Good to DHS

Despite declining revenues and the need to close a \$6 billion hole in the state budget for Fiscal Year 2003, Gov. James E. McGreevey followed through on his commitment to protect programs and services for New Jersey's neediest citizens.

As a result, the Department of Human Services began the fiscal year on July 1 with an \$8.3 billion budget that left most of its programs intact. The mostly minor cuts made to some programs were offset by a number of new initiatives, including \$13 million that will pay to hire 222 additional direct care staff at the developmental centers. This money is in addition to \$8.3 million that was already in the budget to fund 265 new positions in the psychiatric institutions and \$14 million to fund an additional 514 positions in the developmental centers. Another \$2.5 million in state funds will be used to hire 77 additional district office staff at the Division of Youth and Family Services.

"All of us who work for DHS and care about the almost one million people we serve each year can feel good about how the Department fared in the 2003 budget process," said Commissioner Gwendolyn L. Harris. "I believe that this may be the first time that any governor has placed so much emphasis on the needs of the state's most vulnerable populations."

To be sure, one major program was affected negatively. NJ FamilyCare, the popular health care program for working families, will receive \$67 million more in state funding than it did in the 2002 bud-

et. However, with the costs of providing health insurance for the more than 275,000 people already enrolled in the program continuing to escalate, NJ FamilyCare was forced to announce that it will no longer be able to enroll new parents and must reduce benefits for some beneficiaries.

Overall, however, the DHS budget for FY 2003 increased by a total of \$431 million, including \$303 million in state funding.

This year, in addition to new funding to hire additional staff at the institutions, some of the budget

“Through this budget, we are able to fund programs that serve children and their families and thus help us, as a society, invest in the future.”

Commissioner Gwendolyn L. Harris

support relatives caring for children, and new funding to help move people who do not need to live in state hospitals, into the community. New funding is available to create additional before- and after-school programs for about 7,000 preschoolers in the state's 30 Abbott school districts. And, new funding will help people who are leaving welfare for work by providing additional child care, transportation, substance abuse treatment and case management services, as well as mental health assessments and training, educational programs and a new housing initiative.

"Through this budget, we are able to fund programs that serve children and their families and thus help us, as a society, invest in the future," said Harris. "We are able to protect the most vulnerable people in our society who need protection the most. And, we are able to continue to serve working families who are the backbone of our society."

DHS Opens Up under OPRA

OPRA is here. And it's a lot more serious than the famous talk show host who almost shares the same name.

OPRA is the acronym for the New Jersey Open Public Records Act, which took effect on July 8. The law is intended to give the public better access to public records at all levels of government in New Jersey.

The law also creates a process for making those records available. As part of this process, OPRA requires government to provide public records "no later than seven business days after the request is received." It also mandates that each government agency appoint a records custodian to take responsibility for coordinating these requests.

In response to OPRA, each division and office within DHS has appointed a records custodian who is



responsible for handling requests for records that are made directly to that agency. In addition, a staff member in the Department's Office of Legislative, Policy and Legal Affairs has been appointed custodian of records for central office.

In addition to records exempted under the law, DHS has also specified a number of records that it plans to exempt from the law because of privacy and other concerns. These departmental exemptions are subject to public comment through August 30.

"The Department of Human Services has always striven to be as responsive as possible to requests for information from the public," said Commissioner Gwendolyn L. Harris. "And we will, of course, comply with all the requirements under OPRA. However, this Department, more than any other in state government, is responsible for thousands of records that relate to the personal situations of almost one million New Jersey residents each year. So, we will continue to be careful to protect the right to privacy for each person whom we serve."

People who want to request information from DHS must use a form that is available by mail or online at www.state.gov.opra.dhs. This form can be submitted by e-mail or in writing. DHS will not accept a form by fax.

The law also allows government agencies to set fees to cover the cost of copying and providing records. DHS is charging 75 cents per page for the first ten pages, 50 cents per page for the next ten pages and 25 cents per page for all pages after that.

For more information about OPRA, go either to the DHS Web site (www.nj.gov/humanservices) and click on the OPRA symbol, or go to the state's OPRA Website, www.nj.gov/opra.

Role of the Division of Disability Services Continues to Grow

The Division of Disability Services (DDS) marked its first birthday on July 1, buzzing with energy as its role in the state's disability community continues to grow.

Since becoming a full division last year, the former Office of Disability Services has assumed responsibility for more than \$200 million in Medicaid programs (previously administered by the Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services) that serve people living in the community with permanent or temporary disabilities while also undertaking several new initiatives.

"It's been a very busy year," said Division Director William Ditto. "But it's also been a very positive year. As our responsibilities grow, we see the Division becoming an even more substantial part of the community of organizations, groups and individuals who are working so hard to improve the lives of people with disabilities in New Jersey. It's very satisfying and rewarding to see this happening."

One quick measure of the Division's increasing visibility among the state's disabled population is the growing number of calls coming into the DDS helpline (1-888-285-3036). This year, it is averaging almost 600 calls a month, an 18 percent increase over the average number of monthly calls it received last year and a stunning 65 percent increase over the average number of monthly calls received in 2000. Joseph Amoroso, Administrator of Information and Referral Services, said about 25 percent of the current calls are coming from people who have successfully used the helpline previously.



"When they call back, they make a point of saying that they are calling us again because they were so happy with the way we helped them solve their earlier problem," said Amoroso. "It's very gratifying for my staff and me to hear that."



Personal Care Assistance Program, six Medicaid Home and Community-based waiver programs, the Medicaid Personal Care Assistant (PCA) services program and five grant-funded demonstration projects;

1 Working with the Department of Health and Senior Services to administer WorkAbility, the federal program that allows people with disabilities who are employed to pay a small premium and thus, "buy into" the Medicaid program, and the new "Ticket-to-Work" program, which helps people with disabilities find employment. More than 300 people are currently enrolled in WorkAbility, and Ticket to Work is scheduled to begin in the fall;

1 Beginning in early 2003, DDS - which has been designated by the Governor as the lead state agency for Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) - will begin to administer a special fund for people with TBI. The fund, created by the legislature, will be used to pay for services and medical care that are not covered by health insurance. To pay for the fund, the state will collect an additional \$.50 on motor vehicle registration fees;

1 Helping New Jersey respond to the 1999 Olmstead vs. L.C., the U.S. Supreme Court decision which said that states should address the needs of people who do not need to continue to live in an institution. To this end, DDS has applied for and received a growing number of

In addition to its work with the helpline, DDS' growing list of activities includes:

1 Serving more than 18,000 New Jersey residents with disabilities each month through various programs, including the state-funded

federal grants intended to help the state create a structure for responding to Olmstead. For example, DDS recently worked with the Department of Community Affairs and the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development on a plan to obtain 40 Section 8 housing units for people with disabilities.

"The goal in making this office into a Division was to create one place in state government where people with disabilities can go to learn about a whole range of programs and services," said Ditto. "The Division was intended to provide a sort of "one-stop shopping" experience for housing, jobs, transportation and a host of other services. I think we're well on our way to achieving that goal."

DDHH Provides New Assistance to People with Hearing Loss

The Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing has taken at least two big steps this year as it continues its work to help make the world more accessible to people with hearing loss.

On March 26, the Division opened an assistive devices demonstration center at the Joseph Kohn Rehabilitation Center in New Brunswick. The equipment is located in a special room at the Kohn Center, where it provides deaf, late-deafened, hard of hearing and deaf-blind residents with a hands-on opportunity to try out a wide range of devices that can improve their communication with the world around them.

The devices range from smoke detectors with visual signaling and flashing baby cry signalers to vibrating watches and alarm clocks to amplified corded and cordless telephones and printing and non-printing Telecommunication devices for the deaf (TTYs).

The devices are not on sale, but can be ordered from various catalogs that also are available at the Center.

"We're really pleased that the Center has opened," said DDHH Director Brian C. Shomo. "We hope people with hearing loss will make the trip to New Brunswick to see all the things that are available to help them in their daily lives."

Earlier this year, DDHH also helped launch an assistive listening device technology loan program with the New Jersey Library for the Blind and Handicapped.

Through this program, people with hearing loss can borrow assistive listening equipment, free of charge, from one of six libraries around the state. The equipment is intended for use in public places, such as restaurants, public meetings or even doctors' offices, where noise and echoes can accentuate hearing loss.

The participating libraries are the Gloucester County Library in Mullica Hill, the Montclair Public Library in Montclair, the Morris County Library in Whippany, the Ocean County Library in Toms River, the Piscataway Public library in Piscataway and the New Jersey Library for the Blind and Handicapped in Trenton. For more information, call (609) 984-7281 (V/TTY).

Governor McGreevey and Commissioner Harris Present Grants to Help Combat Child Abuse

Governor James E. McGreevey and Department of Human Services Commissioner Gwendolyn L. Harris recently announced that 24 local child abuse prevention programs will receive three-year grants totaling \$840,000 through the New Jersey Children's Trust Fund. The Fund is based at DHS.

"Through the Children's Trust Fund, communities and local agencies are able to provide programs that can help stop child abuse before it starts," McGreevey said. "The Children's Trust Fund has provided funding for more than 500 child abuse prevention programs, totaling \$10.5 million, since the Fund's inception in 1985."

Among the types of programs funded by the Children's Trust Fund are parenting education classes for fathers and teen mothers, home visiting programs for at-risk newborns, respite care, support groups for families of substance abusers and programs for families of children with disabilities.

"The Children's Trust Fund was created to prevent child abuse and neglect before it occurs," said Harris. "Through the years, the Fund has helped us strengthen families, protect children and prevent abuse. However, there is always more that we can do to try and stop the tragedy of abuse, and that is why we are happy to be able to award another round of grants to worthy community programs."

Contributions to the Children's Trust Fund come from a variety of sources including a voluntary state income tax check-off and individual contributions. The grants are competitive and are awarded on a step-down basis, which means the grantees receive 100 percent of the grant amount in the first year, 80 percent in the second year and 60 percent in the third year.

Commissioner Names Management Team

Commissioner Gwendolyn L. Harris has convened a senior staff that includes both people new to the department and long-time DHS employees.

“I’m very happy with the team of people I’ve assembled to work most closely with me at the Department of Human Services,” said Harris. “I believe they are all outstanding individuals who bring great experience and wisdom with them to their new positions. I look forward to working with them as we strive to make this Department the best human services organization it can possibly be.”

The new management team includes:

Kevin Ryan, Esq., Chief of Staff. Ryan was appointed to his new position in January. Prior to joining DHS, he served as General Counsel and Associate Executive Director of Covenant House New Jersey, a non-profit corporation serving homeless and foster youth in Newark and Atlantic City, New Jersey. During his tenure at Covenant House, he founded the Youth Advocacy Center, which offers legal services to homeless youth; wrote the New Jersey Homeless Youth Act; drafted protections for runaway children in federal juvenile justice legislation; and drafted the first health insurance expansion law for children who were aging out of foster care, which became part of the 2000 New Jersey FamilyCare Act. He is an adjunct faculty member of Seton Hall Law School and Fordham Law School, where he teaches constitutional law and poverty law.



Previously, Ryan also served as General Counsel for the Garden State Coalition for Youth and Family Concerns, Inc; and on the Board of Trustees of Catholic Charities for the Diocese of Metuchen and Collier Services. He was named Young Lawyer of the Year by the NJ State Bar Association; a Wasserstein Fellow by Harvard University Law School; Advocate of the Year by the National Network for Youth; and a Skadden Fellow by the Skadden Fellowship Foundation. He received a bachelor’s degree from the Catholic University of America, a Masters of Law Degree from the New York University School of Law and a Juris Doctor Degree from the Georgetown University Law Center.

Deborah Bradley Kilstein, Esq., Deputy Commissioner for Protective Services. Bradley Kilstein, who has worked in state government since 1977, will oversee the Division of Family Development, the Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services, the Division of Youth and Family Services and the Office of Prevention of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. Previously, Bradley Kilstein was Acting Director of the Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services, where she has spent most of her career. She received a bachelor’s degree in nursing from Trenton State College, a master’s degree in business administration from Temple University and a law degree from Rutgers University School of Law in Camden.



Theresa C. Wilson, Deputy Commissioner for Disability Services. Wilson oversees the Division of Mental Health Services, the Division of Developmental Disabilities, the Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, the Division of Disability Services, the Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Fund and the new Facilities Support unit. Wilson joined DHS in 1988 and previously served as Assistant Director of the Division of Mental Health Services. Prior to joining DHS, Wilson spent ten years at SERV Centers of New Jersey, Inc., a private, non-profit mental health services provider, where she served as both assistant director and executive director. She received a bachelor’s degree from Seton Hall University and a master’s degree in social work from Rutgers University.

Jacob Eapen, Assistant Commissioner for Budget, Finance, Administration and Real Estate. Eapen comes to the DHS from the City of Trenton where, for the past five years, he served as Business Administrator and was responsible for the administrative systems of city government. He previously served as Director of the Office of Management and Budget for the City of Newark. Eapen received a bachelor’s degree from Roosevelt University, a master’s degree in social work (administration) from Washington University and a master’s degree in business administration from Rutgers University. He also attended the Senior Executive Program for state and local government officials at the Kennedy School, Harvard University.



Arburta Jones, Assistant Commissioner for Program Integrity and Accountability. Jones’ responsibilities will include chairing the Program Integrity and Accountability Task Force and overseeing the Office of Auditing and the Office of Program Compliance. Jones previously spent 19 years at DYFS where she managed many initiatives, including the Comprehensive Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act and the Children’s Rights Lawsuit. She received a bachelor’s degree from the University of Pittsburgh and a master’s degree in public administration from Rutgers University.

Alma Joseph, Ed.D. Assistant Commissioner for Human Resources. Dr. Joseph comes to DHS from the Department of Personnel, where most recently she was Director of the Office of Performance Management. She received a bachelor’s degree from the College of Mount Saint Vincent, two master’s degrees in education from Columbia University and a doctorate in education from Rutgers University. She has been an adjunct faculty member at Rutgers University for more than 10 years.



Douglas McGruther, Assistant Commissioner for Information and Technology. McGruther previously was Chief Information Officer at DHS, where he also has served as Chief of Staff and Acting Director for the Division of Developmental Disabilities, Special Assistant to the Deputy Commissioner and Acting Deputy Commissioner of Operations. He received a bachelor’s degree from Maryville College, a master’s degree in divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary and a master’s degree in social work from Rutgers University - New Brunswick.

Commissioner Names Management Team *continued*



Freida Phillips, Special Assistant to the Commissioner. Phillips joined DHS after serving for 11 years as Senior Policy Advisor/Senior Fiscal Analyst for the New Jersey State Senate Democratic Office. Most recently, she had focused on health and human services legislation and acted as partisan staff to the Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee. Phillips received a bachelor’s degree from the University of Alabama and a master’s degree in public health from the University of Washington.

Reginald Lewis, Special Assistant to the Commissioner. Lewis serves as liaison to organizations that advocate on behalf of people served by DHS. He also oversees the 56 different boards, councils and commissions that serve and advise DHS and its divisions. Lewis previously served as Director of Policy and Program Development for The Fund For New Jersey, which awards grants to support activities in New Jersey that affect public policy. He also has worked as a Program Officer for The Joyce Foundation in Chicago and The Victoria Foundation in Glen Ridge and as a Program Assistant with the Urban Poverty Program at The Ford Foundation. He received a bachelor’s degree from Morehouse College and a master’s degree in social service administration from the University of Chicago.



Ana A. Montero, Esq., Special Assistant to the Commissioner. Montero is responsible for managing internal affairs, primarily the work plan for the Department. She previously was the Vicinage Assistant Chief of Probation for Camden County - State of New Jersey Judiciary. Prior to that, she was the assistant manager of the Civil Division of the Somerset County Superior Court. She also has worked as a legal analyst for the City of Trenton, assistant administrator of the West Windsor municipal court and in a private law practice in New Brunswick. She received a bachelor’s degree from the College of New Jersey and a Juris Doctor degree from Rutgers University School of Law - Newark.

Lisa Eisenbud, Deputy Chief of Staff. From 1996 until she joined DHS, Eisenbud was executive director of the Garden State Coalition for Youth and Family Concerns, Inc., a statewide advocacy group that focuses on youth homelessness, adolescents in foster care and young adults transitioning to independence. Previously, she had worked as assistant prevention specialist for the Medical Foundation-Massachusetts Prevention Center in Boston, focusing on adolescent public health issues; assistant coordinator for the Allston-Brighton Healthy Boston Coalition in Massachusetts, working to improve health service delivery to multilingual/multicultural communities; and facilitator and acting project director for the Anti-Defamation League in New Jersey and New York City. She received a bachelor’s degree from the University of Massachusetts at Boston and a master’s degree in social work planning and administration from Boston College.



John J. Hart, Deputy Chief of Staff. Hart comes to DHS from Virtua Health, a five-hospital healthcare system in South Jersey, where he served as Director of Community Outreach and Evaluation and Director of Community Relations. Previously, he worked for Philadelphia Health Management Corporation, Health Visions, Inc. in Pennsauken, Rutgers University at Camden and Goodwill Industries of South Jersey. He received both a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree in public administration from Rutgers University.

April Aaronson, Director of Planning and Special Initiatives. Aaronson directs all department planning and oversees special initiatives, including the Children’s System of Care, the Department’s Abbott programming, welfare reform, the Camden Model Project and development of a continuum of care plan for youth aging out of other DHS services. She previously served as Director of the Department of Health and Human Services for the City of Trenton and as a member of the DHS Ad Hoc Task Force on the Children’s System of Care Initiative. She received a bachelor’s degree from Rutgers University, a master’s degree in social work and a master’s degree in public policy and administration, both from Columbia University.



Sudha Tiwari Kantor, Esq., Director for Legislative, Policy and Legal Affairs. Kantor oversees both the Office of the Legal and Regulatory Liaison as well as the Office of Legislative Liaison, which is responsible for both federal and state legislation. She also participates in the Department’s Policy Office. Previously, she was a senior associate with the law firm of Flaster/Greenberg in Cherry Hill, where she focused her practice on Family Law. She received both her bachelor’s degree and law degree from Rutgers University - Camden.

Laurie Facciarossa, Director, Office of Public Affairs. Facciarossa oversees media relations, department-led community education efforts, commissioner speeches and briefings, board appointments and the creation of all DHS publications, including the DHS web site. Before moving to her present position, she worked on health care reform activities at the Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services and was chief spokesperson for the Division of Mental Health Services. A former reporter for the Trenton Times and the Gloucester County Times, Facciarossa has also worked as a domestic violence counselor and a child care center operator. She received a bachelor’s degree in communications from Glassboro State College.



Changes to NJ FamilyCare will protect popular program for uninsured children

NJ FamilyCare has taken steps to preserve the health insurance benefits it offers uninsured children by scaling back the adult portion of the program.

In announcing the changes at the beginning of June, Commissioner Gwendolyn L. Harris said action was prompted by concerns over the state’s continuing fiscal worries and the fact that federal funding for the program will begin declining next year. She also noted that the continuing surge of adult enrollments has dramatically increased the cost of the program far beyond what was anticipated when NJ KidCare expanded to include adults and become NJ FamilyCare in 2000.

Originally, it was anticipated that it would take three years to enroll 125,000 adults in the program.

Currently, less than two years after adults were first allowed to enroll in October, 2000, more than 180,000 adults are in the program, in addition to 96,000 children. As a result, the total cost of the adult portion of NJ FamilyCare in Fiscal Year 2002 will be \$433 million, more than twice as much as the cost projected when the program first began accepting adults.

“The core mission of the NJ FamilyCare program is to provide health insurance to children who have no insurance,” said Harris. “We are meeting the commitment of that core mission by making changes designed to manage the escalating cost of the program.”

The first step in the transition back to a more kid-focused program occurred June 15, when NJ FamilyCare stopped accepting applications from parents. The approximately 130,000 parents already enrolled in the program will not lose their health insurance as long as they remain eligible for the program, but in the future some may see a reduction in benefits and others will see their premiums increase.

Other changes affect the approximately 45,000 childless adults enrolled in the program. These include both Work First NJ/General Assistance (GA) recipients and childless adults who are not GA recipients but whose income is below 100 percent of the federal poverty level (\$8,860 for an individual or \$11,940 for a couple). The state

receives no federal funding for these individuals and must pay for their health insurance coverage entirely with state dollars. Both groups have seen a significant change in their benefits.

Although GA recipients will continue to receive health insurance benefits through NJ FamilyCare along with their cash assistance, they will no longer be enrolled in a managed care plan. Instead, they will receive their primary health care through community-based providers who accept Medicaid on a fee-for-service basis. In addition, all hospital services, including behavioral health treatment, will be reimbursed through Charity Care and a special package of behavioral health and substance abuse services is being created to help address some of the most serious

needs of this population.

Harris said in her announcement that the state recog-

nizes that GA recipients, who are sometimes a homeless and often transient population, have intense health needs and that many have serious mental health and substance abuse problems.

“They were included in NJ FamilyCare because it was thought their health care needs could be successfully addressed through HMOs,” she said. “Instead, it was found that their circumstances are such that managed health care doesn’t work as effectively as anticipated and the cost is prohibitive.”

Childless adults enrolled in the program will remain in an HMO, but their health benefits will be changed to resemble the benefit package that parents receive. In addition, up to 60 days of community mental health services will be provided on a fee-for-service basis, as long as the provider participates in Medicaid. All hospital-based behavioral health services will be reimbursed through Charity Care.

New Jersey continues to have one of the most generous subsidized health insurance programs in the country. It has the highest income eligibility limit for children of any state (350 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, or \$63,350 for a family of four). In addition, New Jersey was also one of the first states to provide health care coverage for parents and it remains one of the few states to include uninsured, low-income adults.



Robot Helps NJ FamilyCare Reach Out to Children

NJ FamilyCare has gone high tech by using a robot to help spread the word among school-aged children about the importance of both a healthy lifestyle and good health insurance.

The robot, called the “Caring Coach,” has visited more than 200 elementary schools since last October and talked to thousands of children about the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Children leave the assembly with a souvenir packet of information that includes puzzles, games and material on NJ FamilyCare.

The robot delivers a simple, motivational message: the best way to achieve good health is through regular exercise, healthy eating and by avoiding drugs, alcohol and tobacco. It does this through a 35-minute presentation specially designed to be delivered in an assembly with as many as 250 pupils in kindergarten through sixth grade.

“We’ve been very pleased with the way the kids have responded to the “Caring Coach,” said NJ FamilyCare executive director Heidi Smith. “We think these assemblies have gone a long way toward helping us achieve our goal of reaching as many uninsured children as possible.” Since last October, more than 14,000 children have enrolled in NJ FamilyCare.

A particular target of the “Caring Coach” school visits has been children whose families have annual incomes between 200 and 350 percent of the Federal Poverty Limit (FPL). For a family of four, this would include incomes ranging from \$36,200 to \$63,350 a year.

These children, who live in families that traditionally have not used many social services, have been the most difficult to enroll in the program. Although it was originally estimated that as many as 71,000 children from families in this income bracket lacked health insurance, only 17,000 are enrolled in NJ FamilyCare. By comparison, it originally was estimated that 94,000 children from families with incomes below 200 percent of FPL were uninsured. Today, 78,000 children in that income group are enrolled in the program.

“Families with higher incomes require targeted outreach to let them know that they also qualify for state-subsidized health insurance,” said Smith. “We’re continuing to reach out to them, because we think it is so important for every child in New Jersey to have the protection of good health insurance.”



Gwendolyn L. Harris continued from page 1

For Harris, the path to becoming Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Human Services began as a child growing up in California, where her father was a civilian employee of the U. S. Air Force. She said that her parents, who were born and raised in the South, both had a strong social conscience and instilled the same in their three children.

“My parents believed that we stand on the shoulders of those who came before us,” she said. “They also taught us that it was important for us to do as well as we could so that we, in turn, could serve our family, our community and our race.”

Her parents were also part of a generation that was literally on the front line of the fight for civil rights. Their marriage was officiated by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who became a friend of her father’s when both were students at Morehouse

College in Atlanta. Her mother, a teacher, was involved with the Head Start program from the day that pioneering child development program for low-income children and their families opened its doors in 1965. She later became involved in adult education and, among other things, taught English to Vietnamese immigrants.

Harris said her decision to become a social worker was influenced both by her parents’ feeling that it was good profession and by her godmother, who was a social worker in New York City. So, after graduating from the University of Connecticut, where she was involved in the student movement, Harris earned a Master’s in Social Work from the University of Chicago in 1974.

Harris’ first job brought her to New Jersey, where she worked as an education and consultation specialist and a psychiatric social worker for the

Community Mental Health Center at the College of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey in Newark. Later, she founded Newark Emergency Services for Families and served as its first Executive Director. She also served as Program Director of the New Community Corporation, a community economic development corporation in Newark. From 1980 to 1988, she worked at DYFS.

“Because I’ve worked at a number of different places, I’ve seen issues from a lot of different vantage points,” she said. “As a result, I’m knowledgeable, independent enough to at least be able to see that there are different ways of doing things, and uniquely qualified to do this job.”

Harris is currently pursuing a doctorate in Urban Planning and Policy Development at the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, Rutgers University.

Governor McGreevey Meets With Teen Foster Children

Governor James E. McGreevey met May 29 with teenage foster children and announced plans to expand services to help them prepare for adulthood. The new services will be paid for with \$1 million that McGreevey added to the Fiscal Year 2003 budget, and will be in addition to \$3.8 million in state and federal funds that is currently being spent to provide these services.

“Our foster children need guidance and support,” said McGreevey. “We need to provide these children with more job training, educational opportunities and basic skills in order to better prepare them for the future.”

Each year, 250 foster children in New Jersey reach the age of 18 and leave or “age out” of foster care, which is administered by the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS). Most of these children, however, lack skills or the ability to get training that would help them find a job and become self-sufficient. They also lack the type of family support that helps other children in their late teens as they leave home and make the transition to adulthood.

To assist them, the state provides independent living and aftercare programs, including transitional housing arrangements. These programs were strengthened in 1999 when the federal government passed the John H.

Chafee Foster Care Independence Act, which doubled the amount of federal funding available to states and provided new assistance, including allowing these children to qualify for Medicaid.

Presently, approximately 800 current and former foster children are receiving transitional support services. The services include vocational training until age 21, independent living programs and skills training in a

variety of areas including relationship building, money management and employment counseling.

With the additional money, DYFS will offer career fair days, expand the number of computer training programs it offers, develop more housing opportunities and double the number of regional Youth Advisory Boards in the state from two to four. The boards, first created last year, are

made up of foster care children who provide input on transitional programs and services. The two existing boards are in southern and central New Jersey; DYFS plans to create boards in northern New Jersey and in the metropolitan region.

“Over the past few years, New Jersey has made great strides in offering more programs and supports for these young adults,” said McGreevey. “However, we need to do more. Through my budget proposal, we will be able to expand current services and launch new programs to ensure that these children are equipped with the tools they need to succeed.”



Governor James E. McGreevey spoke with teenage foster children at the State House on May 29 about plans for new services for them.

Help Available for Parents Seeking Guardianship of Adult Children

Caregivers seeking guardianship of their incapacitated adult children who are clients of the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) now have some help if they cannot afford or choose not to hire a lawyer.

A packet of information designed to help pro se litigants (that is, people who represent themselves in court) in these cases is available from the state Judiciary. It contains concise step-by-step directions and information on what to expect in court along with definitions and copies of all the necessary forms.

For a caregiver to obtain guardianship, the person with developmental disabilities must be considered incapacitated by both DDD and an independent physician or psychologist. State regulations require that a guardianship recommendation be based on sound clinical information, and that every effort be made to find a guardianship solution that is the least restrictive and intrusive into the person’s life as possible.

The packet also contains information on how to find a lawyer and a suggestion that, if possible, hiring one can be a good idea.

The packet of information is available at surrogate’s offices in each county and on the judiciary Web Site at www.njcourtsonline.com

Mark Wickley Academic Scholarship Helps Foster Children Attend College

While studying Economics at two of the most prestigious colleges in the country, Mark Wickley probably wasn’t planning a career in social services. But that’s where the Perth Amboy native, who received a bachelor’s degree from the College of William and Mary, found himself working, not long after receiving his master’s degree from Duke University.

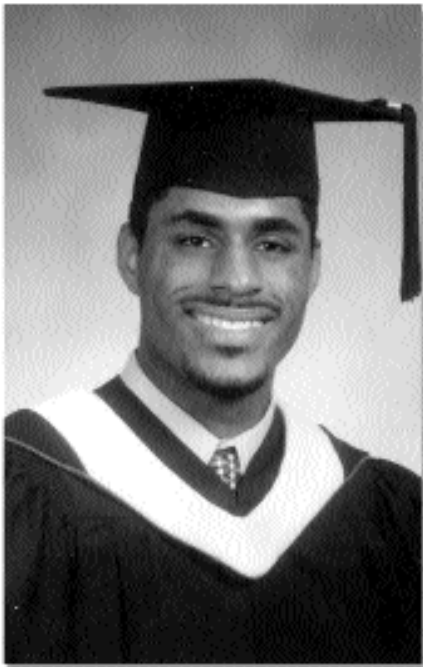
In a career decision that proved to be a good one for the children of New Jersey, he joined the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS). And by the time of his unexpected death in 1996 at age 46, he was a well-respected assistant director, known as a knowledgeable and compassionate advocate for children and their families.

Wickley’s career choice was particularly fortunate for foster children. He took a special interest in their concerns, believed they should have the same opportunities as other children and worked tirelessly to improve DYFS policies that continue to affect foster families today.

So, it was especially poignant when another legacy - the Mark Wickley Academic Scholarship - was recognized on May 17 at the annual dinner of the New Jersey Foster and Adoptive Family Services (FAFS) Organization in Somerset. FAFS created the scholarship after Wickley’s death with the help of his widow, who wanted it to offer substantial financial assistance

for college to foster children, who often “age out” of foster care with little or no support as they make the difficult transition to adulthood.

Speaking at the dinner was the scholarship’s first recipient, Carl Little, 22, who lived in four foster homes in Asbury Park before being adopted at age 10. He told how the scholarship, which paid \$1,000 a year for four years, helped him attend Georgetown University. He graduated in 2001.



Carl Little

Little, an English major, used the money to pay for books and living expenses. He works now as a technical writer in the Department of Radiation Medicine at Georgetown University Hospital while looking for a job in broadcasting.

Little said he looked forward to seeing Wickley’s widow, Mary Bonard, at the dinner. Bonard directs the Office of Publications and Media in the Office of Public Affairs at DHS.

“I wanted to go to the dinner because I would do anything to help the people who helped me,” said Little. “I also knew that Mrs. Wickley would be there. The scholarship made a big difference to me. Georgetown gave me financial aid for my tuition. But because of the Wickley scholarship, I didn’t have to take out any

loans and I was able to graduate without owing Georgetown a dime.”

Bonard said that seeing Little has been an emotional experience. In remarks at the dinner, she said that Little embodies “the hope that (Mark) had for every foster child-and for every foster parent.”

Because her husband so fervently believed in improving the quality of life for foster children, she said she has always had a clear idea of what she wants the scholarship to be.

“It should offer kids a real opportunity to have a promising future,” she said. “From the time I was first approached with the idea, I wanted it to be a scholarship with real money that would give foster children an opportunity to achieve meaningful educational goals, just like the kids who come from more stable families who are better able to help them out.”

Seeing Little, she said, has made her feel more committed than ever to making sure the scholarship can continue to help foster children who want to attend college.

“Because of the scholarship, Mark’s spirit is able to live on through the foster children who will come to benefit from it in the future,” she said. “I think he would have been very proud to know that this was part of his legacy.”

Contributions to the Mark Wickley Academic Scholarship Fund can be made care of New Jersey Foster and Adoptive Family Services, 4301 Route 1 South, P. O. Box 518, Monmouth Junction, NJ 08852.

News in Brief

1 At a press conference held on July 18, Commissioner Gwendolyn L. Harris reminded parents and caregivers to never leave children or vulnerable adults unsupervised in automobiles. When the temperature outside is in the 90's, a closed automobile can heat up to 125 degrees in 20 minutes. Even with a window cracked, a child can dehydrate very quickly.



According to the non-profit group, KIDS 'N CARS, 93 children nationwide have been left unattended in or around cars this year resulting in 21 deaths. In 2001, the organization reported 473 children being left alone with 97 deaths; 35 of these deaths were the result of children being left in hot cars.

If you see a child or a person with disabilities left alone in a car, report it immediately to store personnel, the police or DYFS at 1-800-792-8610.

1 Doris Jones has been appointed Acting Director of the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS). Mrs. Jones began her career with DYFS in 1979 as a caseworker. Before being named Acting Director, she had climbed the ranks of the division and was serving as its Assistant Director for Program Operations in the Northern Regional Office. Mrs. Jones received a B.A. degree in social work from Fairleigh Dickinson University. She and her husband reside in West Paterson.



1 Dr. T. Stephen Patterson, Chief of Psychological Services for the Department of Human Services, has been selected as "Psychologist of the Year" by the New Jersey Psychological Association. The honor will be presented at the Association's October Conference. This distinction recognizes a psychologist who has made an outstanding contribution to the profession of psychology through demonstrated excellence in practice, research or education.



Dr. Patterson has been with the Department of Human Services since 1972. For the past twenty years, he has been Chief of Psychological Services and Professional Development in the Office of Human Resource Planning.

1 Items commemorating the Department's work with families of victims of 9/11 through the Family Assistance Center (FAC) at Liberty State Park are showcased in a new display case in the lobby of the DHS building in Trenton. The 8' x 7' x 18" oak case was built by carpenters at Ancora Psychiatric Hospital in Winslow Township, who used remnants from other recent projects at the hospital and worked on lunch hours and breaks. The carpenters, pictured here with Commissioner Harris, were Tom Whitehead, Dave Lavender, Mark Dickerman and Joe Huetter.

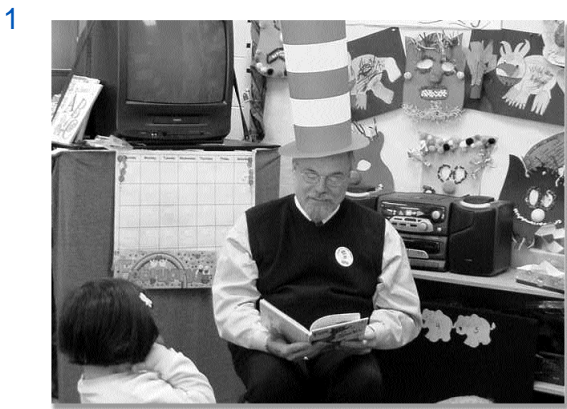


1 DHS employee Janet Gregorovic recently completed her eighth Anchor House Ride for Runaways. She was one of 164 bicyclists who participated in the seven-day, 500-mile bicycle ride fundraiser for Anchor House, the Trenton-based agency that serves runaway and abused children and teenagers.

Gregorovic raised approximately \$2,200 this year and estimates that she has raised more than \$20,000 over the eight years she has participated in the Ride. This year, the Ride began July 14 in Martinsburg, W. Virginia. Riders spent succeeding nights in Westminster, North East, Easton and Salisbury, Maryland, Lewes, Delaware and Hammonton, N.J., before ending in Trenton on July 20.



Gregorovic, who has worked for DHS for 18 years, is Manager-Information Processing in the Office of Auditing.



William A.B. Ditto, Director of the Division of Disability Services, read Dr. Seuss to a roomful of young children with disabilities at the Joseph F. Cappello School in Trenton. He was participating in "Read Across America Day," sponsored by the National Education Association on March 1.

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